

From: [Gray, David](#)  
To: [Bajak, Frank](#)  
Subject: RE: Bajak calling from AP - environmental testing at Houston spill sites  
Date: Sunday, September 24, 2017 2:46:00 PM

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Hi Frank,

Thanks for the email. It appears that the FEMA summary in its release on Friday has created some confusion by combining our submission from the original. We wrote:

***Hurricane Harvey Texas Response and Recovery  
EPA and TCEQ First 30 Days Roll-Up of Actions (EPA fully integrated with Texas Commission on Environmental Quality in Unified Command to support these actions.)***

- ***Drinking Water Assessments:***
  - *625 on-site drinking water assessments completed*
- ***Waste Water Assessments:***
  - *441 on-site waste water assessments completed*
- ***517 orphan containers recovered for proper storage***
- ***43 National Priorities List Superfund Sites assessments completed***

FEMA wrote:

***The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), working with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, completed 625 drinking water assessments and 441 waste water assessments. The agency conducted assessments of 43 Superfund sites and recovered 517 containers of unidentified, potentially hazardous material.***

You can read our latest update from Friday Sept 22 on our website at [www.epa.gov/hurricane-harvey](http://www.epa.gov/hurricane-harvey). We the latest on Superfund sites and many individual site summaries.

Regarding orphan containers. EPA and our response partners have been collecting containers orphaned after the hurricane. We have been reporting these activities. Here is a copy of that update. [These are not related to Superfund clean ups.](#)

***Reconnaissance/Orphan Containers: The TCEQ continues to lead in monitoring facilities that have reported spills. Unified Command has completed reconnaissance activities associated with hurricane impacts. Orphan containers, which include drums and tanks, found floating in or washed up near waterways continue to be gathered, sorted and grouped by type, prior to shipping them off for safe, proper treatment and disposal. All branches of the Unified Command have collected over 980 orphan containers. The Unified Command is preparing collected oil and hazardous materials for proper disposal. Disposal should be completed within the next three weeks. USCG and Texas General Land Office will continue to complete Vessel Recovery activities.***

Best,  
David

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**From:** Gray, David  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 23, 2017 8:07 AM  
**Cc:** White, Terri-A <[White.Terri-A@epa.gov](mailto:White.Terri-A@epa.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: Bajak calling from AP - environmental testing at Houston spill sites

Terri, I have this one. David

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 22, 2017, at 10:47 PM, Bajak, Frank <[FBAIAK@ap.org](mailto:FBAIAK@ap.org)> wrote:

Hi David (and Terri),

This interesting jot appeared in a FEMA email this evening. We're quite curious about your water, air and soil monitoring of course but also wonder about the 517 containers mentioned. Where were they encountered?

I also wonder about some of the spills at plants around the Houston Ship Channel. The 460,000 gallons of gasoline spilled at Magellan and the Valero spill, for which we now have revised numbers.

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The **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**, working with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, completed 625 drinking water assessments and 441 waste water assessments. The agency conducted assessments of 43 Superfund sites and recovered 517 containers of unidentified, potentially hazardous material.

On Sep 22, 2017, at 11:56 AM, Bajak, Frank <[FBAIAK@ap.org](mailto:FBAIAK@ap.org)> wrote:

Thank you, David

I'm interested in getting a rundown on where EPA is collecting air, water and soil samples related to actual or suspected Harvey-related petrochemical spills and releases in 1) the Houston metropolitan area 2) other parts of Texas.

I'd appreciate if someone could talk me through this. I know there is Arkema, the Valero refinery and Superfund sites and would like to know the nature and extent of sampling. I'm curious also about various spills reported to the Coast Guard's NRC.

Many thanks,  
-fb

Frank Bajak, Correspondent

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**From:** Gray, David [<mailto:gray.david@epa.gov>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 20, 2017 5:22 PM  
**To:** Bajak, Frank  
**Cc:** Press  
**Subject:** RE: Bajak calling from AP - Question about Valero refinery

Hi Frank,

The latest information is available online at [www.epa.gov/hurricane-harvey](http://www.epa.gov/hurricane-harvey). We are adding information daily. I should have some additions later today. Most of your questions are answered by information that is posted there. I think you will find it helpful. Air monitoring and sample data information is all there.

I don't have an answer on timing for Valero follow up information but here is more and should be attributed to EPA spokesperson.

"EPA has concluded that the probable source of benzene and volatile organic compound readings in the Manchester community in Houston was the roof failure and spill from a light crude storage tank at the Valero Houston Refinery during Hurricane Harvey. EPA investigation into Valero Houston Refinery response and cleanup activities will continue. EPA has a long-standing practice of not disclosing specific details regarding on-going investigations. However, the complete results of our investigation will be made public upon its conclusion.

Following the review of air monitoring data from EPA's mobile unit and the City of Houston, EPA sent air specialists to the refinery on September 8 to evaluate the incident. Utilizing an infrared camera, EPA identified moderate on-going releases from the 190-foot wide tank. Valero reported to EPA that it was removing residual crude material from the tank using pumps and evaluating safe methods for removing the crumpled roof from the tank.

In addition, Valero has informed EPA that it believes it significantly underestimated the amount of VOCs and benzene released in its original report to the State of Texas Environmental Electronic Reporting System. Based upon the volume of material in the tank at the time of the roof failure, EPA estimates that the emissions from the tank were highest immediately following the roof failure and have diminished over time due to efforts by the company to remove tank contents and apply foam suppressant to minimize emissions. Valero has informed EPA and TCEQ that they are preparing a follow up report that will indicate as substantial increase in overall reported emissions from the event."

Good hearing from you again.

Best,  
David

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**From:** Bajak, Frank [<mailto:FBAIAK@ap.org>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 20, 2017 3:22 PM  
**To:** Gray, David <[gray.david@epa.gov](mailto:gray.david@epa.gov)>  
**Subject:** Bajak calling from AP - Question about Valero refinery

Hi David,

I sent this to Austin Vela and haven't heard back. I also signed up Monday to receive EPA news releases on your website but haven't gotten any.

Can you help?

Many thanks,  
-fb

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**From:** Bajak, Frank  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 20, 2017 11:36 AM  
**To:** 'Vela Austin@epa.gov'  
**Subject:** Question about Valero refinery

Hi Austin,

I've signed up for EPA press releases but did not see anything from you folks that contains the information referred to in this Houston Chronicle story of last week:

"The EPA now says Valero believes it significantly underestimated the volumes leaked near East Houston's Manchester neighborhood. New totals won't be released until the EPA says it has completed its investigation. The EPA said Valero is preparing a new report that will show a "substantial increase" in emissions from the incident."

Can you send along the news release that discusses this matter? Has Valero issued a new report? I see something in the TCEQ database that says "initial report." <http://www2.tceq.texas.gov/oce/eeer/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.getDetails&target=266275>

Can you tell me when we can expect EPA's report on the Valero leak?

I am also interested in knowing where EPA continues to monitor the air for contaminants in the Houston area in particular and whether it is also doing water and soil samples and if so where exactly?

Many thanks,  
-fb

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